

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Initially, Applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement by return of the Form PTO-1449, for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document in the Official Action, and for acknowledging that the drawings are acceptable.

Applicants also acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 1-3 are allowable, and that claims 6 and 7 would be allowable if rewritten into independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim (*see*, the Office Action Summary and on Page 3 of the Official Action dated July 5, 2007).

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1-4 and 7 will have been amended, and claims 5 and 6 will have been canceled (without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein). Claims 1-4 and 7 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

In the Official Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 4 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by KIDALOSKI et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,339,891); and the Examiner has also rejected claims 4 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP Doc. No. 2000-018501 (JP '501).

Without acquiescing to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, Applicants have amended independent claim 4 to generally incorporate the features recited in presently canceled claim 6.

In this regard, Applicants note that on page 3 of the Official Action, under the header “allowable subject matter,” the Examiner acknowledges that the prior art does disclose the features recited in dependent claim 6 (*as well as claims 1-3 which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable, and claim 7 which the Examiner has indicated as containing allowable subject matter*), and that this claim contains allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Applicants have amended independent claim 4 to generally incorporate the features of dependent claim 6.

Further, Applicants expressly reserve the right to submit claims of related scope in another application. Thus, the cancellation of claim 5 and 6 is without prejudice. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request an early indication of the allowance of all of the pending claims.

Applicants further note that claims 1-4 and 7 have been amended, where appropriate, to more clearly recite the presently claimed invention. Thus, the Examiner is encouraged to review all pending claim amendments, and indicate the allowability thereof, in due course.

In view of the amendments and remarks herein, Applicants submits that independent claims 1 and 4 are in condition for allowance. With regard to dependent claims 2, 3 and 7, Applicants assert that these claims are allowable on their own merit, as well as because of their respective dependencies from claims 1 and 4, claim 4 having been amended to generally incorporate the features of dependent claim 6 (which the Examiner has indicated as containing allowable subject matter).

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims in the present application are clearly patentable over the references cited by the Examiner, either alone or in

combination, and an indication to such effect is respectfully requested, in due course.

SUMMARY

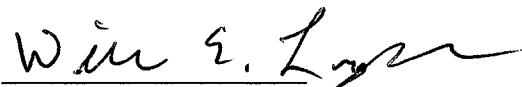
Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully requests an indication to that effect. Accordingly, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action and allowance of the present application and all the claims therein are respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants note that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance, and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection is made by the present amendment.

All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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